



4th District Special Report and Update to Seniors



Dear friends and neighbors,

These are sobering times. While the international events are out of our direct control here in Washington, they are having a tremendous impact on our state economy and state government. We are doing everything possible as a state government to support President Bush as he responds to this threat to our nation.

We want you to know that all of the calls and letters to our office are very much appreciated, and we encourage you to keep communicating with us.

There were many issues in the last legislative session that will have an impact on senior citizens in our community. We had many successes and this newsletter is meant to provide a complete report on these important legislative issues.

You also have our commitment that senior citizen issues will always be at the top of our legislative agenda. Our door is open, so please let us know how we can help.

Again, thank you very much for your calls and letters.

P.S. Please join us in our prayers for the rescue workers in New York and Washington D.C., for the families who lost loved ones to these terrorist acts and for our national leaders.

**We
can
help!**

Whether it is concerns about property taxes, rising rents, problems with state health coverage or long-term care, or problems with Social Security – we can help. Never hesitate to call or just stop by.

Whatever your question or concern, if you can't get a hold of us, our legislative assistants will be able to help. Rep. Crouse's legislative assistant is Scott Staley and Rep. Schindler's legislative assistant is John Charba. They can answer your questions about the legislative session or help you work with state agencies.

Rep. Crouse • 4th District • Rep. Schindler

Progress for seniors in the state budget

As legislators, we are both considered “fiscal conservatives”. In other words, we believe government should wisely spend the hard-earned money of taxpayers. We also believe that government must make tough choices and set priorities, and one of state government’s top priorities must be helping senior citizens.



Meeting the long-term care needs of seniors was an important part of the state operating budget we passed this year, and we were also able to stop proposed reductions in the adult day health program. The other victories for seniors in the budget include:

- Funding to increase nursing services for individuals living in their own homes.
- A wage increase for long-term care workers.
- Funding to increase the average daily nursing home rate by nearly 10 percent.
- Funding to pay higher rates to boarding homes that provide specialized dementia services.
- Authorization to develop two Medicaid waiver programs to serve Medically Needy individuals in home and community settings.

Making long-term care a leading priority

We are both deeply concerned about the number of seniors in our community who are not receiving the long-term care they so desperately need. From our own experiences,



we know the importance of long-term care and will continue to fight for seniors in Olympia.

We did make significant progress this session to strengthen Washington’s long-term care program. Key legislation that passed included:

- SB 5184, to help prevent abuse, authorized Aging and Adult Services Administration (AASA) to share the results of Adult Protective Services investigations to prospective employers of caregivers.
- SHB 1426 authorized AASA to send quality improvement consultants into boarding homes to facilitate “resident-centered” care.
- HB 1341 expanded access and controls costs for those who otherwise have no alternatives to nursing home placements.
- SHB 1320 required adult family home providers and newly hired resident managers to have at least a high school diploma or GED, as well as meet other education and health requirements. This will improve quality of care and safety in residential settings.

Help with skyrocketing utility bills



No one was spared from skyrocketing electricity bills this past year. That’s why the Legislature approved \$1 million in state funds for low-income energy assistance and authorizes expenditure of an additional \$4 million in federal funds through the Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program.

Those families and individuals who might qualify for low-income energy assistance can contact their local utility or community action network.

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Protecting seniors from identity theft

Identity theft can destroy a person's good name and credit. It's reaching epidemic proportions in Washington and seniors are increasingly the victims. Statewide, it is one of the few crimes that increased last year.

We are making every effort in the Legislature to fight back against identity thieves. In 1999, lawmakers established the crime of identity theft. Then in May of this year, we approved legislation expanding the definition of identity theft, and placed additional restrictions on collection agencies and credit reporting agencies.

This is only a beginning. We also supported a proposal to create an identity theft bureau within the Washington State Patrol to track down and prosecute crooks, as well as assist the victims of identity theft. This was opposed by House Democrats, but we will try again next year.



Here are some tips from the Washington Attorney General's office to protect your identity:

- **Do not give your Social Security number, mother's maiden name or account numbers to strangers who contact you, especially by phone, Internet or mail.**
- **Pay attention to what time of month your bills arrive.** If they don't arrive on time, call the creditor to make sure an identity thief hasn't changed your billing address to keep you from discovering phony charges.
- **Guard your mail from theft.** Don't leave outgoing mail in your mailbox.
- **Put passwords on your credit card, bank and phone accounts.**
- **Don't carry your Social Security card.** Leave it in a secure place.
- **Don't carry credit cards or ID cards you don't need.**
- **Tear or shred charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, physician statements, bank checks and statements, expired charge cards and credit offers you get in the mail.**
- **If you want to inspect your credit report, order a copy from each of the three major consumer reporting agencies.** Make sure it is accurate.

If you have become the victims of identity theft, you need to act quickly:

- Contact your local law enforcement agency and the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Hotline, 1-877-IDTHEFT.
- Report the ID theft to your bank and other creditors.
- Tell the prosecuting attorney that if the person who stole your identity is found guilty, you'd like the court to issue you an Order Correcting Public Records.
- Send a copy of the police report to the three consumer-reporting agencies listed above.
- Ask businesses to provide you with information about transactions made in your name.
- If the ID thief has stolen your checks or made fake checks, and then used those checks to make purchases or pay bills, you will probably be contacted by creditors who want you to pay those debts.

For more information, visit the Attorney General's web site at <http://www.wa.gov/ago/consumer> or call their consumer line at 1-800-551-4636.

Important Contact Information



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